

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



June 4, 2009

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50¢

Cops enforce illegal bank foreclosure Homeowner dies resisting eviction

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Mark D. Fussner died May 22 after an hours-long shoot-out with police following the bailiff's unsuccessful attempt to evict the 44-year-old homeowner. Two 24th District Court officers had come to Fussner's home on Anne Street, in the working-class downriver Detroit suburb of Allen Park, to carry out a writ of eviction after foreclosure.

Fussner reportedly ordered the bailiffs to leave his property and said he would open fire to defend his home. They left but returned with armed cops determined to carry out the eviction. The bailiffs' provocation led to the shoot-out.

Fussner was the author of the 2004 book "The Zen of Permanent Weight Loss," which chronicled his struggle and method of conquering obesity. A short biography of the author on Amazon.com states: "Educated in public schools, Mark designed his first invention at 16 years of age. In 1989 he received an Associate's [degree] in Science from Henry Ford Community College. Working his way up from the bottom, he has made his career in Design and Project Engineering... He has owned and co-owned several businesses."

After a five-hour stand-off, Fussner was found dead in his basement from a gunshot wound. It is not yet clear if the fatal injury was self-inflicted or if a police bullet killed him. The homeowner had barricaded himself inside his dwelling and exchanged dozens of rounds with cops from at least five cities, including Detroit's "special response teams" and Michigan State Police. An Allen Park police officer was shot in the arm, leg and stomach early in the stand-off and was released from the hospital

U.N. SUMMIT JUNE 24-26 Developing nations demand say on the economic crisis

By Berta Joubert

A United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, originally planned for June 1-3, has been postponed until June 24-26.

The imperialists, with the U.S. leading the pack, have been pressuring countries to delay or even cancel the conference. This pressure extended to rewrit-

ing and watering down the original draft, which was considered "too leftist." Rich countries were planning to send low-level officials, while Latin American countries were planning to send their presidents and/or their foreign ministers.

The U.S. corporate media were silent about the whole conference until the postponement. Then they wrote gleefully about it, demonizing General Assem-

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the same day. (Detroit News, May 23)

Neighbors and cops reported anywhere from several dozen to hundreds of shots fired by Fussner and police during the incident. People were told to stay in their homes, and schools in the area were put on lock-down. The state police have taken over the investigation, and the Wayne County Medical Examiner's office will perform an autopsy on Fussner.

Moratorium must be enforced

What is missing from the limited stories in the big-business local media is that Fussner's death and the entire eviction situation should not have happened under the law.

On May 20, two days before the visit from the eviction bailiffs and the ensuing gun battle that ended Fussner's

life, President Barack Obama signed public law no. 111-22, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009. By placing a moratorium on subject foreclosures, the law enhances provisions of the Making Home Affordable Program instituted in March.

The MHAP already requires Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and other major lenders—which together hold approximately 75 percent of home mortgages in the U.S. and which have been bailed out with hundreds of billions of taxpayers' dollars—to work out loan modifications in order to avoid foreclosure. These lenders are to lower at-risk homeowners' monthly payments—including property taxes and insurance—to no more than 31 percent of gross income.

Some of the 14 banks and lenders included under

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Prop 8 protests in 100 cities

Demonstrators blocked traffic in San Francisco to protest the California Supreme Court's decision May 26 to uphold Prop 8, the law banning same-sex marriage in that state. There were demonstrations in 100 cities across the U.S., some numbering in the thousands.

WW PHOTO:
JOAN MARQUARDT

High court rules against working women

By Kathy Durkin

On May 18, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a stunning blow to women workers, overturned lower courts' decisions and ruled that AT&T, the seventh-largest corporation in the world, could exclude maternity leaves when calculating pension benefits.

In the case of AT&T Corporation v. Hulteen, seven of the nine justices ruled that since the plaintiffs took pregnancy leaves prior to the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the corporation was lawfully permitted to decrease their retirement funds. They claimed the law was not retroactive.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the only woman on the court, and Justice Stephen Breyer said the court allowed AT&T to pay the plaintiffs "for the rest of their lives, lower pension benefits than colleagues who worked for AT&T no longer than they did." (New York Times, May 19) They said the PDA should have ended such discrimination.

Noreen Hulteen, Linda Porter, Eleanor Collet and Elizabeth Snyder began their maternity leaves before 1976. Hulteen and Porter were ordered by AT&T executives to go home two months earlier than they'd planned, when their pregnancies became apparent.

Hulteen was hospitalized after childbirth for an unrelated medical problem and missed 240 days of work. The company paid her for only 30 days, its maximum for "personal" time off. They considered pregnancy leave "personal" time then and denied her disability leave. When Hulteen retired in 1994, AT&T excluded 210 days when determining her pension benefits.

The corporation also deducted uncredited "personal" days off for maternity leaves when it calculated Collet's pension in 1998 and Snyder's in 2000. AT&T claimed this was lawful, since the leaves were prior to the PDA's passage.

In 1979 AT&T made pregnancy leaves equivalent to disability leaves, but did not make the policy retroactive prior to 1978.

The women's movement had pushed hard for legal protection for pregnant workers and won the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978. The law forbade pregnancy-based discrimination. It required that maternity leave be treated equally with other medical and disability leaves.

In 2001, the four women sued AT&T and asserted that the PDA outlawed paying them lower pensions by deducting their pregnancy leaves. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the plaintiffs, but AT&T then appealed to the Supreme Court.

The plaintiffs and the Communication Workers of America, which represents most of AT&T's workers, had filed sex- and pregnancy-based discrimination charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

New ruling legalizes discrimination

AT&T has continued to discriminate for 31 years since the PDA was enacted. Thousands of women have faced discrimination twice, first when having to take unpaid maternity leave prior to 1979, and then when being denied full retirement pensions years later.

Women's rights activists warn of the dangerous repercussions of this decision for women workers and their families. They say it can affect thousands of women who

took pregnancy leaves years ago and now face retirement.

Marcia D. Greenberger, National Women's Law Center co-president, stressed: "By authorizing AT&T to treat women differently today based on maternity leaves they took in the 1970s, the Court is allowing the perpetuation of pregnancy discrimination in damaging and unjustifiable ways. ... This ruling erects barriers to the equal treatment of women in the workplace and gives a green light to employers to continue penalizing female employees who have borne children." (nwlrc.org)

Debra L. Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women and Families, said: "The [Court] ... dealt a painful and serious blow to ... working women and their families who rely on their retirement benefits. Its ruling [in this case] forces women to pay a high price today because their employers discriminated yesterday.

"The decision couldn't come at a worse time," said Ness. "In the current economic climate, women and their families cannot afford to see their retirement benefits kept lower by discriminatory workplace policies that should have been remedied years ago." (civilrights.org)

In this case, the Supreme Court has again revealed its pro-corporate bias and demonstrated that it is not a neutral body. It found yet one more way to deny women equal pay and benefits.

The ruling also reveals the court's collusion with the corporations to help them maximize profits. How much of AT&T's \$12.9 billion in profits in 2008 and first-quarter profits of \$3.13 billion this year, was made by denying thousands of women equal pension funds due to pregnancy discrimination? Over the decades, how much in profits did the corporation make by denying women paid maternity leaves that they earned?

The Communication Workers union said the court's decision means the "end to the legal challenges brought by CWA and others." The union said that thousands of AT&T employees will "end up with lower pensions and other retirement benefits than their colleagues who did not take pregnancy-related leave," but had equal work records.

"It is also an unfortunate 'win' for AT&T, whose continued pursuit of this appeal shows us once again how little regard they have for their employees." (cwa-comtech.org)

The court's ruling could endanger even more women's retirement benefits, a serious threat today given the economic crisis, and exacerbate the very real impoverishment of aging women workers. Women still face wage inequality, especially those from African-American, Latina, Asian, Arab and Native communities, and lower Social Security payments and pensions.

Despite prohibitive legislation, the workplace is still rife with pregnancy discrimination, which occurs frequently during and after pregnancy when women return to work. Claims to the EEOC objecting to this practice grew 65 percent from 1992 to 2007, filed mostly by women of color and those who work in industries where women predominate in the work force, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families. (infozine.com)

It is capitalism and the profit motive that underlie pregnancy-related and pension discrimination and other sexist, anti-worker practices. This should be exposed and opposed. □

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San Diego rally denounces student deportations

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego

On May 20 at 6:20 a.m., a number of early morning trolley riders, including students on their way to school, were stopped and questioned by Border Patrol and Transit Security Administration officers at the Old Town trolley stop in San Diego.

In a blatant act of racial profiling, people appearing to be Latina/o were singled out, and all were asked for citizenship documents. Twenty-one people, including three students under the age of 18, were arrested, handcuffed and quickly deported.

Local high school teacher and activist Dawn Miller heard about the raid because one of the deported students was in her class. She immediately contacted local advocacy groups and, with the help of the U.S./Mexico Border Program of the American Friends Service Committee, organized a well-attended, highly emotional press conference two days later.

In an initial e-mail, Miller wrote: “I don’t think enough people are aware that this is happening, and I also don’t believe that anyone who now knows that this kind of indiscriminate ‘rounding up’ of our children is happening can stand by and do nothing. I will not stand by and allow my students’ basic human rights to be violated.”

In the same e-mail, Pedro Ríos, director of the AFSC border program, wrote: “The trolley should be a safe place for students and workers. There is absolutely no justification for detaining minors and separating them from their families.” He added that TSA and Border Patrol officials have not been responsive to AFSC calls requesting an explanation for the operation.

At the press conference, in addition to major media representatives, community members, educators and activists were present. Pedro Ríos chaired the event, which was conducted in both English and Spanish.

The first speaker was Angélica Pacheco, whose son was one of the deported students. “My son is an excellent student and a good person,” she said, clearly proud of him and angry at his deportation. She was followed by Ana María Benítez, whose weeping daughter called her Wednesday morning while being temporarily held at the San Diego Border Patrol office. Benítez pointed out that public transportation isn’t safe. She added that other parents have suffered the same injustice she is suffering. “I want them to speak out,” she emphasized.

Dawn Miller, who used the Internet to break the story and spread word of the raid, expressed strong outrage at the

detainments and deportations. “I would expect this kind of action from a fascist dictatorship,” she charged.

David Valladolid, a longtime community activist, seventh-generation resident of California and president of the Parent Institute for Quality Education, offered another strong condemnation of the raid: “We want our children in universities. We don’t want them in jails.” Manolo Correo of Casa Michoacana, who knew and worked with the arrested students in an after-school program, also spoke out against their being targeted.

Kevin Keenan, the executive director of the San Diego American Civil Liberties Union, commenting on the raid, said, “This makes you wonder if this is the change the Obama administration promised.” He announced that other local ACLU projects have been put on hold while his organization investigates the violations of law that this raid represents. One clear violation is demanding that youth under the age of 18 prove their citizenship.

A protest rally scheduled later at the Downtown Transit Center, 1255 Imperial Avenue at 12th Street (Park Blvd.), was announced at the press conference. Organized by the Raza Rights Coalition and chaired by Adriana Jasso, several hundred people, overwhelmingly Latina/o youth, who chanted loudly between speakers, gathered on the traffic island across from the busy transit center.

The spirited rally drew the attention and support of workers on their way home and a number of homeless people who nodded enthusiastically as speakers denounced the raids and demanded government support for education and other human needs rather than repression and racism.

A somber moment of silence at the rally’s end was called by Raza Rights leader Christian Ramirez to pay tribute to local human rights and border activist Roberto Martinez, who died recently at the age of 72. In a written statement, Ramirez remembered his longtime friend and teacher: “With a soft voice but a relentless spirit, Roberto Martinez spoke truth to power in the face of violence fomented by governmental policies. He exemplified with integrity and compassion the cause in defense of human rights, despite police harassment and death threats; he never succumbed to the pressures of those in power. His determination in advocating for justice, peace and dignity is the legacy that he leaves us and one that we hope to continue.” Martinez was the recipient of many honors and the love of the community for his many years of dedicated struggle on behalf of his people. □



From left, Ana María Benítez, the mother of a deported student; Adriana Jasso, Raza Rights Coalition leader and rally chair; and Angélica Pacheco, the mother of a deported student.

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Against racist sheriff Arpaio Arizona detainees on hunger strike

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

Prisoners began a hunger strike May 2 to protest the degrading and inhumane conditions they endure in the jails run by the notoriously racist Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. The crimes of Arpaio are well documented: housing inmates in sweltering tent-cities, parading them through the streets of Phoenix like slaves on their way to the auction block, serving spoiled food referred to as “slop” by the inmates, and denying adequate medical treatment. Arpaio has continued to try to whip up anti-immigrant hysteria in any way possible.

The hunger strike was initiated by women detainees at the Estrella Jail immediately following a march and rally of 3,000 people protesting Arpaio. The hunger strike spread to the Durango and Downtown jails, with between 1,800 and 2,000 inmates refusing meals. Arpaio retaliated against the hunger strikers by placing the jails on full lockdown, denying the inmates their visitation rights, telephone calls and access to television. Despite this, the hunger strike continued.

On May 20 the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed suit against Arpaio last July over inhumane conditions at the jails, condemned the lockdown, stating that the hunger strike is a form of constitutionally protected free speech. An ACLU statement recounted the court injunction won against Arpaio last October for “fail-

ure to provide adequate nutritional food” to detainees. On May 22 Arpaio lifted the lockdown order.

Close to 70 percent of the prisoners in Maricopa County jails are pre-trial detainees; they have not been convicted of any crime. Arpaio fills his jails through racial profiling and conducting heavily armed sweeps of Latina/o neighborhoods. He has created his own private militia known as “the posse.”

Women inmates are often victims of the worst intimidation and brutality by jail guards. Sylvia Herrera of Puente AZ, a Phoenix-area community group involved in organizing the May 2 protest against Arpaio, recounted two recent cases of physical abuse against women in Arpaio’s jails.

Jail guards broke one woman’s arm attempting to force her to sign a “voluntary” deportation document. In another case a pregnant woman was immediately separated from her newborn child after a Cesarean birth and returned to the jail without receiving proper post-Cesarean medical treatment. Herrera says these incidents are known only because the women eventually had to be transported from the jail to a hospital.

Community events are planned in Phoenix-area neighborhoods to show solidarity with those inside Arpaio’s jails. Activists will let it be known that racism, anti-immigrant hysteria, and torture and mistreatment of detainees will not be allowed. □

Activists confront cops’ anti-immigrant actions

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Immigrants and their supporters have marched, rallied, picketed and even met with the mayor’s staff to express their opposition to the enforcing of immigration laws by Houston cops.

At a May 20 press conference and picket line outside of the Houston Police Officers Union, activists made it clear that immigrants were a large part of the Houston population and must be treated with respect by all city agencies.

Chanting, “What do we want? Civil rights! When do we want it? Now!” protesters filled the sidewalks outside of the cops’ union headquarters. The union president recently wrote an editorial calling on Houston Mayor Bill White to do more to enforce immigration laws.

Judicial Watch, a right-wing organization that backs stricter immigration policies, has announced it will sue the City of Houston to force it to step up efforts to combat illegal immigration.

For 17 years the City of Houston and its cops did not enforce immigration laws. That changed this year when Mayor White joined the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s “287(g) program” which allows city jailers to check criminal and immigration histories of people being booked into the two city jails.

There has been a backlash against the mayor by immigrants and their advocates against ICE’S 287(g) program, which makes Houston the only major-city police force in Texas to allow police questioning of nonsuspects about their citizenship status.

Longtime immigrant rights activist Maria Jimenez said she and other opponents

of 287(g) met with the mayor’s staff to express concerns. She said she wasn’t assured that anyone facing a Class C misdemeanor, including traffic tickets, wouldn’t be included.

“It could result in immigrants being hauled off to jail on minor offenses,” Jimenez said. “What this policy would do is encourage racial profiling in which any person who looks Latino would be far more likely to be asked by cops if they are here legally.”

HPD Chief Harold Hurtt has said that while local police cooperate with federal counterparts, once a noncitizen is jailed, HPD cannot be responsible for enforcing immigration laws in Houston, which



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Teodoro Aguiluz, executive director of CRECEN, the Central American Resource Center, speaks out at May 20 protest.

has an estimated undocumented resident population of 250,000 to a half million.

Another demonstration outside the cops’ union office is planned for May 27. For information contact Cesar Espinoza at the Central American Resource Center at 713-271-9703. □

OHIO

Chrysler workers rally to stop plant closing

By Martha Grevatt
Twinsburg, Ohio

On May 22 hundreds of laid-off Chrysler workers rallied in front of their plant in Twinsburg, Ohio. “The people have spoken, keep the plant open!” they chanted. Workers believe they were double-crossed when, two days after voting to grant Chrysler sweeping concessions, they read in the news media that Chrysler’s restructuring includes the closing of their plant and seven others.

Along with Twinsburg, three plants in Michigan, Wisconsin and Missouri—Sterling Heights Assembly, Kenosha Engine and St. Louis North Assembly—were covered by a plant-closing moratorium in the 2007 Chrysler contract with the United Auto Workers. Union members regard the newly announced plant closings—Twinsburg is scheduled to close in March 2010—as an attack on their right to collective bargaining.

Many workers brought their families to the demonstration. They carried signs reading “People before profits” and “Keep our plant open.” They also chanted, “One, two, three, four, open up the factory door!” All but nine members of UAW Local 122 have been on layoff since Chrysler declared bankruptcy April 30.

The union called the demonstration to coincide with a visit to the plant by Dr. Ed Montgomery, President Barack Obama’s “auto recovery czar.” Montgomery was in Twinsburg to offer the town a “relief plan” to be set up after the plant closes. Twinsburg stands to lose nearly 20 per cent of its tax revenues. Local 122 wanted to send a clear message that the workers want to keep their plant open and will accept nothing less.

When this writer began working at the plant 22 years ago, it had 3,300 hourly employees. Now there are 800. After learning of the shutdown, workers were given a May 26 deadline to decide whether to quit, retire under a buyout program or stay with the hope of eventually relocating to another Chrysler facility.

Eight days before the deadline, the buyouts were enhanced, further complicating the workers’ decision-making process. Many workers are only a few months short of the 10 years’ seniority qualifying them for the enhancements, so they are trying to decide whether to leave now or gamble that the enhanced buyouts will be offered again later.

Chrysler has no compassion for the workers and their families, who’ve been given a mere eight days to make what for many is the hardest decision of their lives. Some are refusing the buyout, saying, “That’s what the company wants us to do—leave so they can replace us with workers making half our wages.” Others who are taking the buyout want to stay involved in the fight to reverse Chrysler’s job-gutting plans.

The workers are not alone in their struggle for justice. The honks of support from passing motorists during the two-hour protest were even louder than the chants.

Congresspersons Betty Sutton and Dennis Kucinich sent representatives to the demonstration. On April 30 they and other northeast Ohio members of Congress, as well as Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and Twinsburg Mayor Katherine Procop, were assured by both Chrysler and the White House Auto Task Force that the Ohio stamping plant was staying open. Like the autoworkers, the politicians learned of the planned closing when Chrysler attorneys made the announcement

in U.S. Bankruptcy Court the same day.

UAW members across the country are outraged by Chrysler’s arrogant and malicious disregard of the rights of their sisters and brothers. Local 122 members were joined by delegations from UAW Locals 573, 420, 1005 and 1050. Local 573 represents clerical and engineering staff at the Twinsburg plant as well as the Chrysler Parts Distribution Center in Streetsboro. Locals 420 and 1005 represent workers at stamping plants at Ford and General Motors, while Local 1050 represents workers at the Cleveland Alcoa plant, which supplies the auto industry. Alcoa workers had support from Local 122 during their strike of several weeks in 2006.

Solidarity also came from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, American Friends Service Committee, Jobs with Justice and Bail Out the People Movement. Members of Local 122 are discussing ways of further broadening community support.

There were no supporters in front of the plant from the right-wing element. The Pat Buchanans and the Rush Limbaughs only rail against NAFTA to turn workers in this country against workers in other countries. Many workers and labor leaders, unfortunately, are focused on saving “American” jobs. Some workers at the rally even carried signs calling for layoffs in Canada and Mexico, which are also part of America.

Solidarity across borders and across oceans is what’s needed to counter the brutal capitalist consolidation into fewer car companies with far fewer workers. Autoworkers everywhere are staging protests to assert their right to their jobs. They need to join hands in order to win. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

AT&T’s corporate greed exposed

Ever since the contract of about 110,000 AT&T workers expired on April 4, they have been mobilizing all over the country. That very day, the New Haven Green in Connecticut was flooded with a sea of red T-shirts and signs as thousands of Communications Workers and their supporters from all over New England and New York rallied to demand a fair contract. The main issue: health care benefits for current and retired workers. AT&T, which gobbled up \$12.9 billion in profits in 2008, has the audacity to demand that the workers pay three times what they’re currently paying, or \$3,300 to \$4,500 a year, toward health care coverage. But the workers, who voted to strike in late March, smell the stench of corporate greed. AT&T workers from Maine to California have put pressure on their senators and representatives to send letters to AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson, whose salary was an outrageous \$15 million last year, to demand that AT&T back down. One senator wrote, “While we work on a national health care plan, now is not the time for a profitable company like AT&T to slash crucial health care benefits.” (CWA e-burst, May 21)

Grocery workers fighting back in Colorado

The contract of approximately 17,000 supermarket workers at Safeway, King Soopers, City Market and Albertson’s in Colorado was set to expire May 9. But after Safeway workers voted to strike May 8 for livable wages, decent health benefits and a secure pension, the bosses extended the contract until May 30. Meanwhile Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter slammed the workers, represented by Local 7 of the Food and Commercial Workers union, when he vetoed a bill May 19 that would have restored unemployment benefits to workers locked out during a contract struggle. But the workers, who anticipate a lockout, are fighting back. Hundreds rallied in Westminster on May 20. As Julie Collier, a 30-year King Soopers employee, told the May 19 Colorado Independent, “When is the timing right to help the people who make \$10 an hour, not just the people who make \$10 million a year?” The time is now!

Black farmers demand settlement

The case of about 94,000 Black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which agreed to pay for past discrimination in lending and other USDA programs, was supposedly settled in 1999. Nearly \$1 billion in damages were paid out on almost 16,000 claims. But about 75,000 additional Black farmers filed claims after the deadline, which, according to National Black Farmers Association President John Boyd, was not well publicized nor were appropriate provisions made to file claims. (For instance, farmers who don’t have phones or indoor bathrooms were told to go online to get information about the settlement!) On April 28, the NBFA led a rally of several hundred Black farmers at the USDA office in Washington, D.C., to demand payment. Although President Obama has allotted \$1.25 billion in the 2010 budget to finally right this wrong, Boyd says that \$2.7 billion is actually needed to compensate all the eligible farmers. (blackenterprise.com, May 8)

Statistics confirms need for EFCA

A new study issued May 20, “No Holds Barred: The Intensification of Employers Opposition to Organizing,” confirms why unorganized workers need the essential card check provision in the Employee Free Choice Act. The study was based on a review of National Labor Relations Board cases and documents, as well as surveys of 562 experienced union organizers and 1,004 union elections from early 1999 to late 2003. These were then compared to previous studies over the past 20 years. Cornell University professor Kate Bronfenbrenner concluded that “the aspirations for representation are being thwarted by a coercive and punitive climate for organizing that goes unrestrained due to a fundamentally flawed regulatory regime.” The study showed that in 63 percent of private sector organizing drives, workers are interrogated about their support for the union in one-on-one meetings with supervisors; 57 percent of bosses threaten to close the worksite; 47 percent threaten to cut wages and benefits; and 34 percent fire workers who support the union. Even after employers use 10 or more tactics to thwart organizing efforts and workers still manage to win an election, 52 percent are without a first contract one year later and 37 percent don’t have a contract within two years. Support card check in the EFCA now! □

MICHIGAN

UAW workers protest shutdown



Hundreds of UAW members from Local 1700 rallied on May 21 demanding their Sterling Heights Assembly plant stay open and operating in Michigan. There are about 1,100 UAW workers at the plant. The slated closing of this Chrysler factory would also devastate many communities. Local 1700 supporters at the rally included members of Jobs With Justice, the American Federation of Teachers, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, the People’s Summit & Tent City, Labor Notes and many UAW members at other locals throughout metro Detroit and beyond.

—Report and photo by Bryan G. Pfeifer

HARLEM, N.Y.

March, boycott honor Malcolm X

By Dolores Cox
Harlem, N.Y.

El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X, was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Neb., on May 19, 1925. The names he held reflected both his personal journey and that of oppressed people for whom he gave his life. The racism experienced by his family in the 1930s was routine—from verbal harassment to being burned out of their home, to surviving, as a child, the lynching of his father.

Like other Black Muslims, Malcolm replaced his slave name with an X to symbolize his lost true family name due to slavery. He chose the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz after making the hajj (the obligatory Muslim pilgrimage) to Mecca.

In 1964, Malcolm X built the Organization of African American Unity. Speaking at the Hotel Theresa in New York City that year, he stated, “We have to keep in mind at all times that we are not fighting for integration, nor are we fighting for separation. We are fighting for recognition ... for the right to live as free humans in this society.” (Malcolm-x.org/quotes) On Feb. 21, 1965, he was assassinated in New York City while preparing to speak at an OAAU rally.

In the village of Harlem in New York City, Malcolm X is remembered as “our Black Shining Prince.” This May 19, Malcolm’s 84th birthday was celebrated and honored by a 20th anniversary rally and Black Power march along Harlem’s main business district on 125th Street. Sponsors of the event were the December 12th

Movement, the Black Men’s Movement, the Malcolm X New Millennium Committee and the Patrice Lumumba Coalition.

Malcolm’s birthday is traditionally commemorated by stores and restaurants shutting down along 125th Street for a 3-hour period. At the rally, celebrants informed the public to either do their shopping before 1 p.m. or after 4 p.m.

The community was reminded that none of the stores in that shopping area would exist in Harlem without the power of “Black money” and that they are still (even with encroaching gentrification) the majority population in Harlem. As such, those doing business in the community must show respect to the community.

“The time is now to stand up for Black power, by any means necessary” and “Black power for Black people in our community” were sentiments expressed during the rally. It was a reminder that people make history. And that it was a day of struggle.

At 1 p.m., with police escort, the marchers stepped off from the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building led by a procession of drummers and a display of the red, black and green flag. Store after store displayed signs on their doors stating, “To our customers: in remembrance of Malcolm X’s birthday, this business will be closed between the hours of 1-4 p.m.”

Most shops promptly closed at 1 p.m., while a few did so only after they heard or saw the marchers approach along 125th Street, moving from the west side to the east side. Here and there, a shop needed a



Malcolm X

gentle reminder of the day’s occasion.

Along the route were chants of “Shut ‘em down!” and “Black power for Black people, by any means necessary!” There was the call and response of “Whose streets? Our streets!” and the calling out of Malcolm X’s name.

When an occasional merchant refused to close the store, the marchers stopped, gathered around and shouted, “No disrespect for Malcolm X!” and “Boycott, boycott, boycott!” They vowed they would return, declaring that disrespect of Malcolm would not be tolerated. Omowale Clay from the D12 Movement solemnly stated when this happened, “I had a dream that

places like this won’t exist in Harlem.”

The day was marked by the issuance of a printed Message to the Grassroots: “To honor Malcolm is to honor the best in ourselves. This is no time to sit back or sit down. A Black man in a White House does not make it ours. ONLY YOU are the key to your self-determination and Black Power. Wall Street’s government is still stealing our homes; Police still killing our children; Schools still not teaching our kids; Health care still out of reach; and no jobs for our people ... In the spirit of Malcolm X, to the streets for our human rights.”

Cox is an International Action Center activist/volunteer.

‘Settlement’ exposes politician-financier corruption

By Jaimeson Champion

Carlyle Group, the world’s second largest private equity corporation, agreed on May 14 to pay \$20 million as part of an out-of-court settlement for its role in the “pay-to-play” corruption scandal involving public pension funds. The out-of-court settlement shields all Carlyle executives from any criminal liability.

Carlyle is a private equity firm that enjoys close connections to the Bush family and a number of other prominent politicians. It is one of a handful of financial firms that have been ensnared by an investigation launched by the New York State attorney general. Begun more than two years ago, the investigation has now spread to a host of other states as it has become apparent that the trail of corruption extends far beyond the Empire State.

The unfolding investigation has exposed the process whereby private equity corporations bribe politicians with campaign contributions and direct kickbacks. Once in office, the politician steers public pension funds toward investing with the private equity corporation that backed his or her campaign.

Hank Morris, a top aide to former New York State Comptroller Alan Hevesi, was recently indicted for an alleged role in the scandal. Morris allegedly received at least \$15 million in kickbacks from investment firms like Carlyle Group and Quadrangle Group in return for giving the firms access to the retirement funds of public employees.

Quadrangle Group was co-founded by Steven Rattner, who is currently overseeing the attack on autoworkers as head of President Barack Obama’s auto task force. Rattner was serving as a senior executive

at Quadrangle during the years the company was allegedly paying kickbacks to Hank Morris and others.

As part of the settlement, Carlyle Group has agreed to sign on to New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo’s proposed Public Pension Code of Conduct. The code will place restrictions on campaign contributions from financial firms to politicians who control public pension funds.

Cuomo said of the code, “This is a revolutionary agreement. It ends pay-to-play. It bans the selling of access. It puts the political power brokers out of business.” (Bloomberg, May 15)

If only it were that easy. While Cuomo claims victory over corporate corruption and audaciously claims to be putting “the political power brokers out of business,” the reality is that his settlement with Carlyle amounts to an ineffectual slap on the wrist. The watered-down code will do little to end the symbiotic relationship between corporations and politicians.

The settlement allows Carlyle to essentially sweep serious allegations of corruption under the rug in return for the \$20 million payment. While \$20 million is an almost-unimaginable fortune for the hundreds of thousands of city and state employees whose retirement funds Carlyle gained access to, for Carlyle itself, \$20 million is a drop in the bucket. Carlyle is a financial behemoth with a war chest of more than \$85.5 billion.

Carlyle received more than \$878 million in investments from the New York State Common Retirement Fund alone. Carlyle extracted “management and incentive” fees totaling \$37.5 million from the retirement fund. (ABC, May 14)

When discussing the investigation at a recent press conference, Cuomo likened

some of the political players involved in the scandal to Boss Tweed, the infamously corrupt New York City politician from the mid-nineteenth century. Before proclaiming that his new code of conduct agreement will put an end to pay-to-play scandals, Cuomo should ponder the fact that the same kind of corruption that was taking place more than 150 years ago is still going on today.

Under capitalism, politicians are paid representatives of the banks and corporations. They enable the unceasing assault by the corporations and banks against the workers and oppressed. Politicians served this role in the early stages of capitalism in Boss Tweed’s day, and they serve this role in modern global capitalism.

The results of Cuomo’s investigation are yet another confirmation that a tiny minority of billionaire politicians, bankers and bosses are perpetrating a perpetual rip-off of the workers and oppressed. They are robbing us from the cradle to the grave.

The same politicians who hand out the retirement funds of public employees to private equity corporations are slashing budgets for public education and social services for children and youth. They are the same politicians who are overseeing the trillion-dollar, taxpayer-financed bailouts of the banks and corporations. And they are the same politicians and corporations that are fighting in tandem against pro-worker legislation like the Employee Free Choice Act.

For the workers and oppressed, the pension fund scandal is additional proof that faith in capitalist politicians is misplaced. The power for true and lasting change lies not in the empty rhetoric of capitalist politicians, but rather in the mass worker-led movements that are out

in the streets struggling for social and economic justice.

Workers will be gathering for a People’s Summit in Detroit on June 14-17 to strategize and plan ways to strengthen the mass struggle against the corporations and banks and their political enablers. For more information visit www.bailout-people.org. □



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‘State of Emergency’ campaign launched

N.C. workers fight cuts in jobs, services

By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.

When North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue announced that all state workers would be mandated to take 10 unpaid hours off to help balance the budget, many workers began discussing how they could collectively withhold their labor by organizing to take the same time periods off.

Then the state legislature began discussing furloughs of up to 20 days for all state workers. But that plan was soon taken off the table after seeing the mass outrage it caused.

City and local governments began looking at similar measures to cut costs on the backs of workers and the oppressed. The city of Durham announced it was laying off 35 workers and eliminating 78 jobs. The city of Charlotte announced similar cuts, including threats to privatize the entire Recycling Department.

Already mass lay-offs and plant closings mean the state now suffers from the country's second-highest official unemployment rate at 10.8 percent. In reality it is much higher when counting total unemployment, including permanently discouraged workers and the underemployed.

On May 16, a thousand teachers from around the state, organized by the North Carolina Association of Educators, rallied against the 10-hour furloughs. Many of the teachers from rural areas had never been to a rally before, yet it seemed clear to them that cuts to teachers can only be stopped through mass action.

Jennifer Lanane, president of the Wake County Chapter of the NCAE, led the teachers in a strong chant: "Shut it down!"



Teachers rally in Raleigh, N.C., against governor's furloughs.

FIST PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

After the rally, the teachers jumped in their cars and went on a motorcade to the governor's mansion.

On May 18, over 50 city of Durham workers crowded into the chambers of City Hall to listen to City Manager Tom Bonfield present his proposed budget plan. It includes a water utility hike of up to 9.5 percent, a pay raise for police and fire totaling \$1.8 million, and elimination of 113 city worker jobs, saving the city \$6.5 million.

According to officials, the plan allows the city to get out of the hole from lower sales taxes, state revenue sharing, charges for services and permit fees. At the same

time, the city will keep \$19.8 million in a reserve fund for what Bonfield called "worse economic times to come." This amount represents 12.1 percent of the general fund! Unionists have calculated that the city could spend \$6.8 million of this money, which only lowers the reserve to 8 percent, maintain a maximum bond rating and save city workers' jobs.

Gregory McNeal, a member of the Durham City Workers Chapter of the Electrical Workers union Local 150, told Workers World, "It's a rainy day now and those funds need to be released. ... If it wasn't for us, this city wouldn't run." The union is launching a broad campaign to get com-

munity support against cuts in such services as trash pick-up, which, if it's allowed to pile up on sidewalks and streets, could become a major public health hazard.

Workers fight to save jobs

UE Local 150 has launched a State of Emergency Campaign around the state to give workers the tools to fight back against budget cuts. Workers have already begun to circulate a petition that demands "No layoffs, furloughs, pay or service cuts," and "Tax the corporations and the wealthy."

The state budget has a deficit of up to \$4.8 billion, yet the state Senate revenue plan includes additional tax breaks to big corporations like Bank of America, which already receive over \$1 billion in tax breaks every year from the state. According to the plan, these tax breaks will increase by as much as \$350 million per year!

Gwen Burwell, a licensed practical nurse at state-run Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh and secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Council of UE Local 150, told Workers World: "I think it is outrageous. It makes me sick that the state is lowering taxes for corporations. What about other people who have children, who have to eat, pay light bills and car bills?"

Burwell continued: "The big corporations' taxes are cut, but what are they doing with that money? They aren't giving it to us! We are the ones on the bottom, working hard, getting paid less as they sit on the throne getting richer and richer while our people are suffering."

North Carolina already has low tax rates for multinational corporations

Doctors, nurses arrested protesting health p

By David Hoskins

Thirteen doctors, nurses and activists were arrested in Washington, D.C., throughout the month of May. The protestors were detained on different days for interrupting the Senate Finance Committee roundtable on health care to protest the exclusion of single-payer advocates from the hearings on reform.

Among those arrested were Margaret Flowers, M.D., co-chair of the Maryland chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program; Russell Mokhiber, founder of Single Payer Action; and Katie

Robbins, an assistant national coordinator of Healthcare-NOW.

The roundtable, chaired by Democratic Sen. Max Baucus, has so far included 15 representatives of insurance companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers and hospital corporations. Doctors, nurses and patients' rights advocates have yet to be included in the discussions. Sen. Baucus has publicly stated that the single-payer option is off the table.

The exclusion of the single-payer point of view stands in opposition to the sentiment of the majority of U.S. physicians, 59 percent of whom have stated their sup-

port for national health insurance legislation as indicated in the April 2008 Annals of Internal Medicine.

Democrats' plan threatens employee benefits

House and Senate Democrats have indicated that a new tax on employer-provided health insurance is an option to help raise the \$1.2 trillion they will need to finance their plan. Their pricey plan only tinkers around the edges of the real problems in health care—the profit motive in general and health insurance industry greed in particular.

The Washington Post reported on May 22 that closed-door meetings of the Senate Finance Committee have secured support for a medical benefits tax from a surprising number of lawmakers. White House officials have repeatedly stated that all financing options are on the table, implying that a health benefits tax could win administration support.

Baucus has suggested the possibility of taxing coverage for all workers with benefits valued above the national average of \$13,000 for family coverage. One problem with this proposal is that it would unfairly single out union workers who have quality plans that include dental care, vision benefits and low co-payments.

Health Care for America Now, a coalition of union and community organizations, has pointed out that Congress should be finding ways to provide those quality benefits to everyone, not penalizing unionized workers who have fought for and won the health care coverage they deserve.

Budget director attacks Medicare

Office of Management and Budget Director Peter Orszag recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal that health care cost reduction would result in higher quality care. If Orszag had meant that skyrocketing health insurance and pharmaceutical industry profits have driven up costs to the point that it seriously threatens patient lives, most workers would agree.

Orszag's statement about cutting costs,

Homeowner dies resisting eviction

Continued from page 1

the program are Bank of America, Chase Home Finance, CitiMortgage, Countrywide, Ocwen and Wells Fargo. The MHAP guidelines apply to any homes that are owner-occupied, including homes that are already in foreclosure. (financialstability.gov)

Section 401 of the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act states that it is "the sense of the Congress" that there be a "foreclosure moratorium" in that "mortgage holders, institutions, and mortgage servicers should not initiate a foreclosure proceeding or a foreclosure sale on any homeowner until the foreclosure mitigation provisions" of the Hope for Homeowners program and Obama's "Home-

owner Affordability and Stability Plan" have "been implemented and determined to be operational by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of the Treasury." (thomas.loc.gov)

Where were the headlines on May 21 in the capitalist-owned press about the just-signed Helping Families Save Their Homes Act and its foreclosure moratorium? There were none or very few.

Jerry Goldberg, a Detroit-based attorney who represents homeowners and renters in foreclosure and eviction cases, told Workers World: "The Register of Deeds records show that Mark Fussner's mortgage was owned by Chase Bank, which had a duty under federal law to work out a solution that should have prevented the

bailiff from coming to his home on May 20 to evict him.

"This eviction should not have happened. Fussner's death should never have happened. It was entirely preventable except that banks and lenders don't follow the law until they are forced to."

It took a protracted struggle by activists around the country to win the new federal moratorium on foreclosures. It will take even more struggle to publicize this law and stop more deaths from occurring, as well as other drastic actions by homeowners who face the life-altering, heart-wrenching process of losing their homes in record numbers to foreclosure and eviction.

E-mail: khamel@workers.org.

ices

DETROIT

People’s Summit & Tent City protests planned

whose hunger for profits and super-exploitation of workers knows no limits. Corporations cannot be lured to stay for any long period of time by lowering taxes, as the politicians claim.

As part of the State of Emergency Campaign, some workers who are members of the Carolina Auto, Aerospace and Machine Workers Union, a chapter of UE Local 150, are fighting for recall rights. They are organized in a non-majority union without a collective bargaining agreement. In March 390 of almost 1,500 workers at the Cummins Rocky Mount Engine Plant were laid off. Workers have been rallying and mass petitioning ever since.

The Raleigh People’s Assembly will host a forum on May 30 where teachers, state workers, city workers and youth will speak out against budget cuts. Led by a powerful rank-and-file workers’ organization, this will be an important opportunity for other left and progressive forces to unite and help build a statewide fight-back. The campaign also plans to launch similar actions in 10 other cities throughout the state.

Part of this campaign demands collective bargaining rights for public sector workers, who are still denied that right by law. There are currently two bills in the state General Assembly that would repeal the ban. This is the first time that such a bill has had support in the state Senate.

On May 26, the HOPE (Hear Our Public Employees) Coalition, which includes UE Local 150, NCAE, the Teamsters, the North Carolina AFL-CIO, Triangle Labor Group, the State Employees Association of North Carolina in Service Employees union Local 2008, and others, will convene a lobby day to repeal the ban on collective bargaining. □

plan

however, is not a reference to trimming the wallets of health industry executives. The statement instead appears to be aimed at reducing the costs per enrollee for Medicare and Medicaid recipients.

Orszag wants federal budget analysts, commonly derided as “bean counters,” to determine what tests and procedures are considered excessive and subject to cuts. He also attacked allegedly lengthy hospital stays in some regions as another source of unnecessary expense.

Orszag maintains that intensive testing and hospitalization do not provide better health outcomes. This concentration on reducing these aspects of Medicare coverage is interesting in light of recent findings in the New England Journal of Medicine.

An April 2 study found that a third of all Medicare patients are readmitted to the hospital within 90 days after being discharged. More than two-thirds of patients who had been discharged with a medical condition, and half of those who had been discharged after a surgical procedure, were rehospitalized or died within the first year following their discharge.

Orszag’s logic ignores the fact that readmission rates are the prevalent and costly result of inadequate care in the first place. It appears that Medicare recipients are being denied the quality tests, procedures and hospital stays they need. The financial cost of this phenomenon exceeds \$17 billion a year according to the article. The human cost can be death. Either way, this is not the health care reform voters signed up for at the polls in November. □

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Organizers of the People’s Summit and Tent City taking place June 14-17 in downtown Detroit have announced several demonstrations and other events as part of its four-day agenda. The People’s Summit will counter the National Summit, known until recently as the National Business Summit, occurring June 15-17 at the GM Renaissance Center.

A State of Emergency Fightback Rally will kick off the People’s Summit on June 14. Organizers say they will do what the politicians have so far refused to do—declare a state of economic emergency in Michigan and all areas affected by high unemployment, plant closings, mass layoffs, and record foreclosures and evictions. They will demand and begin instituting an immediate moratorium on layoffs, budget cuts, evictions and foreclosures.

On the morning of June 15, activists will distribute a Know Your Rights leaflet to homeowners and renters at Detroit’s 36th District Court, the busiest foreclosure and eviction court in the U.S. A lunchtime rally and speak-out for the moratorium and to “bail out the people not the banks” will

take place. The theme of the day’s events will be “Detroit’s crisis as a symbol of the country and the world.”

Organizers will invite members of the big-business summit and the media to go on a Corporate/Banker Devastation Tour of the city. They will view neighborhoods with foreclosed and boarded-up homes, closed factories and schools, and other signs of poverty and homelessness. Activists from around the country are also invited.

Later, a mass march down Woodward Ave. will go from Grand Circus Park, site of the People’s Tent City, to the GM Renaissance Center on Detroit’s riverfront. People’s Summiteers will protest the corporate agenda of the big-business gathering and put forward positive demands such as free national health care for all and a massive program for union jobs at living wages.

In the evening a youth hip-hop concert and rally to “stop the war on drugs” and end police brutality are being planned.

The theme on June 16 will be “Stop the war on the workers and poor—feed the people, not the Pentagon!” A morning demonstration outside the People Mover station at Grand Circus Park will demand accessibility for disabled people on the el-

Business summit participants exposed

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

A diverse coalition of poor and working people across the U.S. will actively resist a big-business National Summit which will gather in Detroit June 15-17 at the Renaissance Center, site of General Motors’ world headquarters.

Detroit is the “economic Katrina”—the ground zero—of capitalist devastation, and those gathering at the business summit are responsible for this and other atrocities. Members of the People’s Summit and Tent City say those at the big-business summit are enemies of all poor and working people.

The unrelenting attacks against poor and working people from business summit participants include the foreclosure epidemic; wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and elsewhere; for-profit health care; anti-union attacks, plant closings, layoffs, and unequal pay for women and people of color; school closings and tuition hikes; lead poisoning and environmental racism; budget cuts and privatization; the super-exploitation of immigrants; and much more.

A short list of the enemies

• **Richard H. Anderson, CEO of Delta Airlines.** Anderson was executive vice president of UnitedHealth Group and served as president of UnitedHealth’s Commercial Markets Group. He also

serves as a director of Cargill Inc. and Medtronic Inc. The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA union says that their campaign to unionize 20,000 members at Delta has been up against “one of the most expensive and illegal anti-union campaigns in history.” (www.afanet.org)

- **Richard Dauch, CEO of American Axle,** has led the onslaught against workers at this auto parts supplier in Hamtramck, Mich. In May the company announced that the majority of work at this plant is being moved out of town and at least 500 permanent layoffs will happen this summer. This is only one year after a bitter three-month strike where American Axle wrested massive concessions from UAW workers at the plant. Dauch is on the board of directors of the National Association of Manufacturers and works closely with the Michigan Manufacturers Association. His book, “Passion for Manufacturing,” will be part of his “Structural Costs Are the Enemy” panel talk at the big-business summit.
- **Big Three auto executives—William Clay Ford Jr. (co-chair of the business summit) and Alan R. Mulally from Ford and Robert L. Nardelli of Chrysler**—will be playing leading roles at the summit. They will be discussing how to wrest yet more concessions from the UAW and other workers across the globe.
- **John Engler, former Michigan governor and now president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers,** will be speaking on the same panel as Dauch. Engler is

evated train and full rights for people with disabilities. The Detroit People Mover says on its Web site that it is “100-percent accessible,” but it’s not. The elevator at the Grand Circus Park station doesn’t work.

From noon to 1:30 p.m., as former Michigan Gov. John Engler, now head of the National Association of Manufacturers, and Richard Dauch, the CEO of American Axle & Manufacturing, speak at the big-business summit, a mass rally for jobs will take place. Autoworkers, including member of Soldiers of Solidarity, are expected to attend.

A Stop the Wars at Home and Abroad Rally and Cultural Program are slated for the evening. Special sessions on workers’ occupations, immigrant and women workers, fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act and other struggles will occur throughout the People’s Summit and Tent City. Videotaped testimony and people’s speak-outs on how the crisis affects them, as well as discussions about the People’s Stimulus Plan and Economic Bill of Rights, will take place daily.

Call 313-887-4344 or visit www.peoplesummit.org for more information or to register, endorse, get leaflets and volunteer. □

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JUNE 14–17

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hated by workers and the poor throughout the state for his legacy of racism, welfare gutting, cutbacks and attacks on unions. But that makes him perfect for NAM, founded in 1895, whose goals include low wages, long hours, pollution, child labor, sexism and racism. NAM counterparts—the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—will also be key players at the business summit.

- **Finance capitalists and insurance corporations, many of whom have received billion-dollar bailouts** and who are responsible for the worldwide foreclosure epidemic, raiding of pensions, and other crimes against poor and working people, will also play prominent roles. These include representatives of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Ltd., Citigroup Inc., Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Ernst & Young LLP and Aetna Inc.
- **Dow Chemical, infamous for toxic chemical production,** including napalm and Agent Orange used by the U.S. in the Vietnam War, and environmental devastation in India (Bhopal, Nandigram) and other places, will be represented by its CEO Andrew N. Liveris, who is also co-chair of the summit. Liveris serves on the board of directors of Citigroup, the world’s leading financial services company.
- **DTE Energy’s CEO Anthony F. Earley Jr.** DTE is despised in metro Detroit, particularly by African-American customers, for its monopolistic practices, which include increasingly high rates, shutting off gas and lights, unreasonable payment plans and more.
- Some other corporations participating in the summit include the United Parcel Service, IBM, Microsoft Corp., ConocoPhillips Co. and McGraw-Hill Cos., which owns Standard & Poor’s, McGraw-Hill Education, Business Week and J.D. Power and Associates. □

Fight to save Troy Davis continues on two fronts

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

More than 100 vigils, rallies, marches and other actions were held across the U.S. and in other countries worldwide on May 19 in support of Troy Anthony Davis, the Georgia man facing execution for a crime he has always denied committing.

Convicted solely on eyewitness testimony in 1991, the state's case has steadily unraveled as seven of the nine trial witnesses have recanted their testimony, claiming police coercion and intimidation. The Chatham County prosecutor offered no physical evidence at trial—no gun, no fingerprints, no forensics—nothing that linked Troy Davis to the crime.

Many more people have implicated one of the two remaining eyewitnesses, Sylvester “Red” Coles, as the shooter of Mark Allen MacPhail, the off-duty Savannah policeman, in a fast-food parking lot. It was Coles who initially went to the police in the midst of an intense hunt for the shooter. Coles named Davis as the guilty party.

According to the sworn recantation statements, police interrogators then threatened witnesses to likewise identify Davis or face dire consequences. Dorothy Ferrell, who was on parole when she testified, said she was afraid that she'd be sent back to prison if she didn't agree to cooperate with the authorities by fingering



Left, New York protesters.



Right, Heidelberg, Germany: Youth on bridge demand justice for Troy Davis.



Davis. In her affidavit, she said, “I told the detective that Troy Davis was the shooter even though the truth was that I didn't know who shot the officer.”

Another of the trial witnesses, Darrell Collins, said the police threatened to charge him as an accessory to the crime if he refused to help make the case against Troy Davis. A teenager at the time, Collins said he was told that he would go to prison and might never get out.

Three of the new witness statements claim that Coles later admitted to them that he did the shooting.

Davis has come within days and hours of death three times. The Georgia Supreme Court and the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals both have ruled by one-vote margins to refuse his request for a hearing on the new evidence sworn to by the recanting witnesses and those who were not heard at trial. The dissenting judges in both courts

adamantly rejected the majority's narrowly defined opinions, calling them a grave injustice and unconstitutional.

In conjunction with the Global Day of Action for Troy Davis on May 19, Davis' lawyers filed a habeas corpus petition with the U.S. Supreme Court.

The next day, some 27 former state and federal judges, justices and prosecutors signed a friend of the court brief supporting the examination of the new evidence, which strongly points to Davis' innocence. Among those who filed the amicus brief were former Deputy U.S. Attorney General Larry Thompson, nine former U.S. attorneys—including Bob Barr, who also was a Georgia congressman—and former FBI Director William Sessions, as well as Norman Fletcher, who was a chief justice of the Georgia Supreme Court.

The list of prominent world figures who have called for a re-examination of

Troy Davis' case in the name of justice includes Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Pope Benedict XVI and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. The May 23 New York Times printed a piece by its op-ed columnist, Bob Herbert, calling for a review of the new evidence.

As more people learn of the blatantly unjust circumstances of Troy Davis' conviction, their reactions of outrage and disbelief have motivated them to take action. Hundreds of thousands of people have signed petitions, written letters and made phone calls to Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue and the Georgia Pardons and Parole Board.

To sign a petition that will go to an expanded number of elected officials, media outlets and federal officials, please go to www.iacenter.org For more information, go to www.gfdp.org.

Three GI resisters tell their stories

By Dee Knight

In real life **Travis Bishop** is best known for his acoustic country music CD, “So Here We Go.” He is also known as Sgt. Bishop, currently AWOL from Fort Hood after refusing to deploy with the 57th Elite Service Battalion to Afghanistan. He told his story recently in fthoodsoldiervoices.blogspot.com.

“A few days before I was set to deploy, I was approached by members of an organization who told me that I had a choice. They told me that they were here to support me, and that if I really was against the war our country was currently in, I could choose not to go. All those old feelings and worries came back with a vengeance, and I began to question the war again. After a full day of thinking, the only reason I had come up with for me to go was the fact that my best friend was going too. ... I hope that he can forgive me one day.

“So the afternoon I was set to deploy, while everyone else was loading their gear in the van headed toward the airfield, I loaded my gear in my car, and left. It was the hardest decision I have ever made.”

Bishop doesn't want to be AWOL for months or think of himself as a deserter. But, he says: “I believe that this particular war is unjust, unconstitutional and a total abuse of our nation's power and influence. And so, in the next few days, I will be speaking with my lawyer, and taking actions that will more than likely result in my discharge from the military, and possible jail time ... and I am prepared to live with that.”

After five months in the Army, **Dustin Che Stevens** sat down during Airborne graduation in 2002 in order to refuse graduation. He was told to go home and wait for his discharge. Seven years later, he was arrested after being stopped for a traffic violation in his hometown of Louis-

ville, Ky. He is charged with desertion. He is now awaiting court martial at Fort Bragg, N.C.—“Home of the Airborne.” While waiting, Stevens told Courage To Resist: “I started reading [literature on conscientious objection] and started thinking for myself. I knew in my heart and in my mind that I could not kill anyone. ... I went back and told them that.”

Stevens will be court-martialed unless he “volunteers” to deploy to Afghanistan. He shares a tiny 8-by-8-foot room with three other GIs accused of desertion. He says there are about 60 others in detention, most on AWOL charges, having left the Army during or after training. “Lots of other guys return from AWOL and test positive for drugs, and are processed out,” he said. But if you return without evidence of drug use, the Airborne wants you as a combat soldier in Afghanistan.



PHOTO FRANK BÄRMANN



André Shepherd, Che Stevens and Travis Bishop opening for Toby Keith in Baghdad, Iraq.



Stevens' attorney, James Branum, is determined to beat the desertion charge and help him avoid a long prison sentence. To support Dustin Che Stevens contact couragetoresist.org.

In a recent letter **André Shepherd** sent his “heartfelt thanks” to all his supporters. Last Nov. 26 he applied for asylum in Germany. The German Federal Office for Migration has not yet issued a decision, which could take several more months. Commenting on his case, he said: “This fight is not about a single soldier's

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Immigrant rights event draws big crowd

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Syracuse, N.Y.

“Immigrant,” a bilingual community event on immigrant rights in Syracuse, held in the Blodgett High School cafeteria, drew a standing-room-only, multinational crowd of more than 110 people on May 14. Some participants traveled from as far as Buffalo, Rochester, Binghamton and Manhattan. La Casita Cultural Center Project organized the event, in collaboration with the Detention Task Force and the May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights/International Migrants Alliance.

The event lasted several hours—from tapas to dinner to music. All remarks were translated into both Spanish and English. The program included panels, which gave voice to struggling undocumented workers, and round tables on the roots of migration and immigrant rights. Lead organizer for La Casita, Immaculada Lara-Bonilla



From left, Luz Incarnación, José Peréz, Caroline Kim, Teresa Gutierrez, Aly Wane.

WW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

declared: “The event succeeded in meeting our goals—to share stories of migration, illegal arrests and racial profiling; to provide information about legal rights for immigrants; to bring together different advocacy groups and the local Latino/a community and strengthen existing support networks; and to celebrate culture as a form of empowerment, including awareness about immigrant people's cultural rights.”

Alison Mountz, an organizer with the DTF, said: “This event provided an opportunity for members of the DTF to meet and work in solidarity with groups across

New York state. Hundreds of people have been arrested at workplaces across central New York and at the Syracuse train and bus station, as they have downstate. Often the families of those arrested on buses and trains live elsewhere, so we have been building a network to help families locate loved ones who disappear into the system.”

The DTF has been holding moving pickets and handing out leaflets at the Regional Transportation Center in Syracuse to protest the detentions by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Immigrant workers are also now being arrested by ICE at construction sites in the area, including the Carousel Mall.

Spontaneous applause greeted the remarks of Teresa Gutierrez, of the May 1st Coalition and the International Migrants Alliance, when she said: “I didn't cross the border. The border crossed me.” Gutierrez, a Tejana, referred to the imperialist seizure by the U.S. of portions of Mexico in 1848, including what is now the state of Texas.

She pointed out that as corporations move throughout the world to make profits by exploiting workers, immigrants should certainly have a right to move wherever they need to. In response to a question from Gutierrez, a majority of those in the room raised a hand to indicate they were born in the U.S. Gutierrez emphasized that their solidarity was crucial to stopping the crises of racist profiling, check points and prison detention of immigrants. □

FBI entraps four Black men in phony bomb plot

By Larry Hales

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York state Gov. David A. Paterson and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly honored the FBI agents and New York Police Department personnel who foiled the phony FBI-engineered “terror plot.”

Each official took turns May 21 congratulating the federal and local cops, overblowing the circumstances surrounding the arrests of four Black men.

Bloomberg said of the arrests, “I feel safer in the city today than ever before,” and, “They have prevented what could have been a terrible loss of life.”

Paterson said it was “one of the most heinous crimes that has been [planned] in this city for a long time.”

Kelly called the response of the cops and FBI, “a textbook example of how a major investigation should be handled.” (New York Daily News, May 22)

This so-called plot ended when police arrested James Cromitie, 44; David Williams, 28; Onta Williams, 32; and Haitian immigrant Laguerre Payen, 27, as the four allegedly planted two bags supposedly filled with inert plastic explosives at two synagogues in the exclusive Riverdale neighborhood in the Bronx.

As with all the other so-called “home-grown terror plots,” this case is being revealed for what it really is: entrapment. It is one more incident of an FBI informant going fishing, baiting, in particular, Black men and enticing them with money and other favors, directing their conversations and playing upon their anger against their oppression.

This case has many similarities to a so-called plot involving the Miami 7. Five of the Miami defendants of the mostly Haitian group of seven were convicted a week earlier. It is also similar to the phony Fort Dix plot that led to five Muslim men being convicted earlier in May.

Informant promised to help dying brother

Elizabeth McWilliams, the mother of David Williams, said that the FBI informant, Shahed (Malik) Hussain, offered to help save David’s dying brother, who needs a liver transplant and is dying from an immunity disorder, sarcoidosis. McWilliams said, “He promised he would take care of it.” (Daily News, May 24)

James Cromitie’s friend, Kathleen Baynes, said the informant, also known as Maqsood, had given Cromitie rent money and cash. “They come and hit a brother who is down and out,” she said, “and tell him they’ll give him the world. Maqsood is no different than a pimp or drug dealer sitting on 42nd St.” (Daily News, May 24)

The government charged the four men with one count of conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction and another count of conspiracy to use an anti-aircraft missile. The four had all been released from prison in the recent past after having served time, mostly for drug convictions.

Cromitie worked at Wal-Mart and Onta Williams at loading and unloading trucks since being released. Another of the men worked at a landscaping company. Their neighbors describe them as nice guys. “There’s nothing bad to say about him,” one friend said, regarding Cromitie. (Los Angeles Times, May 22)

David Williams’ aunt, Aahkiyaah Cummings, said Williams is a good father.

Laguerre Payen had been diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic, for which he takes medication. Payen cannot read or write English. When asked if he understood what he was being charged with, he responded, “sort of.” Payen was also unemployed, had no money and was fighting a deportation order. (Daily News, May 24)

This government conspiracy involved the informant targeting the Masjid al-Ikhlâs mosque in Newburgh, N.Y., starting a few years ago. According to worshippers there, Hussain focused “most of his

attention on younger Black members and visitors.” (New York Times, May 23)

Informant’s deal with the FBI

Hussain, who had been an informant in a number of other federal cases, had moved to the U.S. from Pakistan in 1994. He was arrested in 2002 and charged with trying to help people in Albany get drivers’ licenses. Facing deportation, Hussain instead chose to assist the FBI in exchange for a light sentence of five years probation. (New York Times, May 23)

Worshippers said Hussain would approach young men, mostly Black men, and ask them out to lunch. He also asked the assistant to the imam at the mosque for a meeting.

Before attending services at the Masjid in Newburgh, Hussain went to another one in Wappingers Falls, not far from Newburgh. It was there that he asked an assistant to the imam for a list of worshippers. Most worshippers found Hussain suspicious and stayed clear of him.

Hussain stopped attending services at the Wappingers Fall mosque in June 2008, shortly before he met James Cromitie. It is reported that Cromitie told Hussain that his parents lived in Afghanistan for a time and that he was angry about the U.S. war there. This was around the time their relationship began.

A member of the mosque, Jamil Muhammad, said of Hussain, “It’s easy to influence someone with the dollar. Especially these guys coming out of prison.” (New York Times, May 23)

All of the men existed under dire circumstances forced upon them as oppressed Black men with a prison record before they began being mixed up with the government informant.

Hussain would sit outside the Newburgh mosque in his black Mercedes. He may have appeared as a way for the men to escape their circumstances, a way for David Williams to get his brother the liver

transplant, a way for the others to get their heads above water in times of a crisis of the system.

As in the case of the Miami men, the informant did much of the talking. Hussain posed as having contacts with a Pakistani group, Jaish-e-Mohammed (Mohammed’s Army). He had the contacts to get the disabled anti-aircraft weapon and the inert explosives. Hussain even took the four men to get cell phones.

Since the men primarily worked at low paying jobs, transcripts of the investigation will most likely reveal that Hussain bankrolled the entire operation.

That Cromitie expressed anger towards the United States for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is no great crime. The majority of people in the U.S. and around the world oppose the U.S. occupations of those countries.

A New York Times article quoted above even reveals that the imam of the Newburgh mosque questions whether a plot would have developed if Hussain had not been around.

It is evident and will prove even more so over time that if he had not been entrapped, James Cromitie would have most likely gone about his life. So would the other three. But the FBI and the informant preyed upon their anger.

Ultimately, though, it is not their anger that is at fault, but the conditions of U.S. society. Here oppressed people seek and, in particular, these four Black men sought, whatever means might improve their daily existence. Then they are criminalized for it.

This crisis of the system falls upon them harder than on most people. If this is indeed “how every major investigation should be handled,” as Police Commissioner Kelly said, then more such cases of entrapment can be expected. Their righteous indignation towards capitalism and imperialism can itself turn them into pariahs. □

European workers fight capitalist crisis, demand jobs

General strike shuts southern Basque Country

Thousands of workers took to the streets May 21 in the Basque Country, the most industrialized part of the Spanish state, under the slogan “Against the bosses’ extortion.”

They not only took to the streets but they walked off the job. Nearly 53 percent of the plants were shut down and the others experienced major slowdowns.

The big union confederations (CCOO and UGT), the Spanish central government, the new government of the Basque region, and the bosses and their media all opposed this strike, called by two left-wing unions close to the Basque nationalist movement.

Some 15,000 people marched in Bilbao, the capital of the Basque region, 10,000 in San Sebastian and Pamplona, and more than 8,000 in Vitoria.

According to a letter in English from LAB, one of the unions which called the general strike, “The Basque working class, women and men, went to the streets to denounce the capitalist crisis, and to make it clear that those [who demonstrated] and the workers are unwilling to pay [for] the crisis that big capitalists and bankers and the rightist government politicians have generated.”

Autoworkers on the move

The consolidation of Europe’s auto industry drew some sharp responses from unions in England, Italy and France, whose members took the streets in mid-May to demand that the government put the needs of workers for jobs ahead of the needs of the banks and stock markets for profits.

In Birmingham on May 16, Unite—England’s largest union—called a national march in this one-time manufacturing center. Thousands of workers in every sector of the economy marched in the rain, in the first demonstration that the unions have called in 30 years, demanding that the government protect jobs.

Derek Simpson, joint general secretary of Unite and the leader of Britain’s main auto workers’ union, said, “Billions have been spent to save the banks but those same banks are still throwing people out of their houses when they can’t meet their mortgage payments because of a recession those very banks caused.” Simpson accused the banks that won’t lend to manufacturers of taking “food from the mouths of our families” and “threatening our jobs and homes.” (Xinhua, May 17)

Over 15,000 workers, mainly from Fiat and its subcontractors, also marched on May 16 in the Italian city of Turin, a major manufacturing center in northern Italy. Fiat is the largest private employer in Italy with 82,000 workers.

Most of them came from assembly plants in southern Italy, where opposition to Fiat’s

plans has been sharp. Workers at the Fiat plant in Palermo, Sicily, held a short strike on May 11. They want their jobs guaranteed, even if Fiat acquires Opel, the Germany-based subsidiary of GM, and Chrysler.

The workers began their march at Fiat’s Mirafiori factory and walked toward the company’s headquarters, the BBC reported.

“We are Fiat. Fiat must not expand without us!” was the main slogan of the march. (Swiss Radio.)

A few days later in Paris, 700 Continental rubber workers marched—with smoke flares and fire crackers—from the Gare du Nord railroad station to the stock exchange. Their lead banner read, in French and German, “Workers united against stock market thieves.”

As they marched they threw Continental tires high into the air. When they reached the stock market, they made a bonfire from the tires they carried. (AFP—Agence France Press.)

Xavier Mathieu (CGT) said at the rally, “The stock exchange is where the sweat of the world’s workers is for sale.”

Negotiations between Continental, a German company, and the French unions representing the workers at their French plant in Clairois were scheduled to start later that afternoon. The workers are demanding they be paid through 2012 and get additional compensation for losing their jobs.

European workers demand jobs

Hundreds of thousands of workers took part in a series of demonstrations following the appeal of the European Confederation of Unions to demand “priority for jobs.” More than 350,000 workers marched in the streets of Madrid, Brussels, Berlin and Prague between May 14 and 16. In a declaration read on May 16, CES General Secretary John Monks said: “The scope of these European demonstrations reveals the growing preoccupation of the workers with their future. ... We urgently need a stronger regulation of the financial markets and a reinforcement of the influence of workers in administrative councils. The workers also want programs supporting industry and jobs as well as ambitious means to fight against the growing unemployment.” (Avante, May 21)

Portugal—85,000 march in Lisbon

Called out by the Democratic Unity Coalition (CDU), some 85,000 people marched through Lisbon, Portugal, on May 23 in anticipation of the upcoming election to the European Parliament and in response to the capitalist economic crisis that has driven many Portuguese workers into deep poverty.

The CDU is an electoral coalition of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)

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Korea's defense & U.S. belligerence

Anyone in the United States who pays attention to the corporate news media must think that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea just violated the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Right?

Except that no such treaty exists.

Some 180 countries have signed it, but only 148 have ratified it. According to the Web site of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, "All 44 States specifically listed in the Treaty—those with nuclear technology capabilities at the time of the final Treaty negotiations in 1996—must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force." (ctbto.org)

Nine out of those 44 nuclear states have not ratified the treaty, despite having signed it some 13 years ago. Therefore, the treaty is not and has never been in force.

The government that seems to protest the most when a country like the DPRK conducts tests sits in Washington. But guess what? The U.S. Senate has not ratified the treaty. In fact, it is Washington's refusal that is the main obstacle to the CTBT treaty taking effect.

The U.S. tested the world's first atomic bombs in 1945 and almost immediately dropped two of them on Japanese cities, killing 220,000 people on the spot and leaving another 200,000 so poisoned by radiation that they died soon after. From that time until it signed the treaty in 1996, the U.S. had tested 1,032 nuclear weapons.

That is more nuke tests than have been carried out by all the rest of the countries in the world combined, right up to the present.

So how can the world have any confidence in a nuclear test ban treaty if the country that has tested such a hugely disproportionate number of weapons won't ratify it?

The DPRK has successfully conducted two underground tests of nuclear devices, one in 2006 and another on May 25. It has not dropped any bombs on anyone. In fact, its troops have never

fought anywhere except in Korea, and then it was to expel foreign invaders.

The DPRK's determination to devote substantial resources to building a nuclear deterrent reflects Korea's tragic history. First invaded and annexed by colonial Japan, then occupied by U.S. troops at the end of World War II, Korea suffered enormously from the rise of imperialism in the 20th century.

The U.S. created a puppet military dictatorship in the south, which in 1948 declared itself the Republic of Korea. It was only then that the revolutionary forces, who had liberated the northern part of Korea from Japan's iron grip, responded by declaring the establishment of the DPRK, not as a permanent state that would ratify the division of Korea, but as a recognition of reality. The goal of the DPRK, and of the Korean people as a whole, has always been to reunite the country. Within two years, however, the DPRK was fighting a new war against imperialist invaders—this time hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops.

Several million Koreans, civilians and soldiers, were killed in the 1950-53 war. Some 53,000 U.S. soldiers died. Though the war ended in a ceasefire with the two sides roughly where they had been at the start, the U.S. occupiers of southern Korea refused to sign a peace treaty with the DPRK. And that's where things have stood ever since, with between 30,000 and 40,000 U.S. troops occupying the south at any one time.

Many countries—first among them the United States—have declared they had to have nuclear weapons for self-defense. None has a stronger claim to a nuclear deterrent than the DPRK, which for more than half a century has faced the constant threat of new aggression from the world's most heavily armed imperialist superpower.

If Washington were sincere about wanting to move toward a nuclear-free world, it would start by signing a peace treaty with the DPRK, ratifying the CTBT and removing its occupation troops from Korea. □

U.N. summit June 24-26

Developing nations demand say on the economic crisis

Continued from page 1

bly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann.

Globalization has rapidly made the current financial and economic crisis a disaster on a world scale, with developing countries impacted the most. Those with the least resources to confront the debacle did not create the crisis but are paying for it.

The convening document for the conference said, "Jobs are disappearing by more than a million a month. ... Private capital flows to emerging economies this year are projected to be down by 82 percent from the boom year of 2007. ... The World Bank, which has described the crisis as a 'development emergency,' projects a finance gap of up to \$700 billion in these countries, and the possibility of a 'lost generation,' with added deaths of 1.5 to 2.8 million infants by 2015. Over 100 million people are expected to be tipped into extreme poverty each year for the duration of the crisis." (un.org/ga/econcrisissummit)

In previous U.N. summits and conferences the rich imperialist countries have pledged to help poor countries, yet no such action has been taken now. In many instances, the most important decision-making meetings have been held behind closed doors with only the imperialists and countries whose economies are of great importance to them—as in the case of the G20, which includes Argentina, Brazil and Mexico from Latin America.

This time has been different. D'Escoto, in a recent interview with the Cuban daily Granma, said, "We have to remember that the General Assembly was practically forbidden from talking about international finances, or world economy. Those topics were reserved for the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO. It has always been like that."

D'Escoto, who is also an advisor to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, stated that this time the voices of all 192 countries must be heard, particularly the voices of the poorest countries that have suffered the most. "The aim is to identify emergency and long-term responses to mitigate the impact of the crisis, especially on vulnerable populations, and initiate a needed dialogue on the transformation of the international financial architecture, taking into account the needs and concerns of all member states.

"A new financial, economic, monetary and world trade plan—that is what we intend to do in a democratic and participatory way," continued D'Escoto. Developing countries are demanding a say about world finances and daring to challenge U.S. hegemony in the world economy, including its dollar as a reserve currency.

Latin Americans put forth progressive agenda

The wave of progressive change in Latin America is forcing international organizations to allow debates and change photo opportunities into working meetings. As the representative from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines cautioned in April, the developing countries want to prevent this meeting from turning into "another U.N. conference whose result is simply to call for another conference. We want concrete results to report to our people at home."

Many Latin American and Caribbean nations have been working for the regional integration that was Simon Bolivar's dream. One of these efforts is ALBA, an alternative to the U.S.-inspired "free trade" agreements. In April the six ALBA countries—Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela—met in the Venezuelan city of Cumaná in preparation for a pending meeting of the Organization of American States in Trinidad and Tobago later that month.

They issued the Declaration of Cumaná, which reads in part: "Capitalism is destroying humankind and the planet; the developed countries have an ecological debt with the world; [We] condemn migrant discrimination in all its forms; basic services of health care, education, water, energy and telecommunications should be declared human rights and should not be the object of commerce; demand an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba and, regarding the U.N. Conference, state that the solution to the global economic crisis and the definition of a new international financial body should be adopted with the full participation of the 192 member countries of the U.N."

Their presence in the OAS summit was significant. In Cumaná they had already criticized the OAS meeting for two main reasons: It was not going to discuss the economic crisis which they viewed as imperative, and it did not include Cuba. For the first time, each and every country, some more passionate than others, spoke against the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua said he did not recognize the OAS because it excluded two countries of the Americas, Cuba and also Puerto Rico, the last colony in the hemisphere.

The strong condemnation of the U.S. blockade of Cuba made U.S. President Barack Obama say a few conciliatory words. None of the ALBA countries signed the OAS resolution. In fact, they and Ecuador have declared the need to organize a different body than the OAS where the United States will not be included. Besides ALBA, efforts have already begun for that purpose, like UNASUR and the Bank of the South.

The ALBA countries plan to attend the U.N. conference and firmly push their progressive agenda. The strength of these countries is that their peoples are in movement. They mobilize and take the streets, not only the ballot boxes, to force and demand changes.

The United Nations has been an organization where decisions have been made by the rich imperialist countries led by the United States. Is this about to change? Will the voices of the peoples in developing nations be heard? Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, among others, have at different times expressed the need to replace the U.N. if it does not become a body that represents and respects all nations.

One thing is for sure. The voices of developing countries will be heard, inside or outside the United Nations. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

'Gov't for whom?'

Taken from a May 11 audio column at www.prisonradio.org. Go to www.millions4mumia.org to get legal and political updates on Mumia's case.

As the economy tumbles like weeds in an old Western, companies are getting bailouts in the double-digit billions, while workers are being asked to "sacrifice."

Those at the top of the corporate wheel have not only lost nothing, they've not been asked to give anything back. Indeed, they've not even been asked what they've done with over \$300 billion bucks.

The only thing certain is they've not done what they promised to do when they first began to beg for public monies.

But when automotive industries tried to get the kind of help that their brothers in banking got, they were kicked in the pills [privates], and the political elites demanded that they use this economic crisis to whip up on the auto unions, to fire more workers, cut pay, and rifle the pension envelopes of retirees!

And what of President Barack Obama, who received the votes of millions of labor families?

If you listened instead of looked you might've thought Bush was back, judging by the rhetoric: "It will require unions and workers who have already made extraordinarily painful concessions to make even more."

The UAW has given up so much in the last few years that it ain't funny. Several years ago, management pushed for and got a two-tiered pay system, where new workers got about one-half the pay of other workers and temporary worker status.

How is it remotely fair that those who have less are being asked to give up more?

For decades, people have believed that Democrats were more beholden to labor, given their years of voting for that party.



Africa faces major challenges on OAU/AU anniversary

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Tanzanian Amina Salum Ali, the African Union’s permanent representative to the United States, spoke at Wayne State University in Detroit this May. During her lecture and in a later interview with the Pan-African News Wire, Ali emphasized the continent’s need to overcome the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Her answers included comments on Somalia, Zimbabwe and the U.S. military presence in Africa.

On May 25, 1963, over 30 member-states formed the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, amid a groundswell of independence struggles. This body later became the African Union (AU). Every year this date is celebrated on the continent and in the world as “Africa Day” or “Africa Liberation Day.”

The origins of the concept of the commonality of conditions among Black peoples grew directly out of the revolts against slavery and other acts of self-determination on the part of the African people in the colonies throughout the Americas, as Kwame Nkrumah, the founding prime minister and president of Ghana, the first state to win national independence south of the Sahara, noted in his 1968 pamphlet entitled “The Specter of Black Power.”

“Pan-Africanism then moved to Africa, its true home, with the holding of the First Conference of Independent African States in Accra (Ghana) in April 1958, and the All-African People’s Conference in December of the same year.” (Reprinted in “Revolutionary Path,” 1973)

In February 1966, the socialist-oriented government of Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in Ghana with the backing of Washington. After relocating in Guinea and being appointed as co-president by Ahmed Sekou Toure, Nkrumah concluded that the OAU could not fulfill its mission as long as U.S. imperialism maintained its influence on the continent.

Challenges of the African Union today

In 2002 the OAU was recast as the African Union (AU) with the stated aim of forming a monetary system, parliament, peacekeeping force, greater intercontinental trade and economic integration, etc. A Pan-African Parliament has been established and is based in the Republic of South Africa.

In Detroit, Ambassador Ali stated that the AU “is implementing a three-year strategic plan (2009-2012) dealing with peace and security, due to a number of conflicts on the continent. The AU is developing protocols that guide peace and security as well as an African Stand-by Force and a

Rapid Deployment Force. In addition, the AU has established a ‘panel of the wise’ consisting of former heads-of-state who will intervene to resolve conflicts.”

With specific reference to women’s status in Africa, Ali said, “Women need to be empowered, and this is very key to the AU’s objectives. The AU has adopted a declaration on women’s rights that has as a goal the realization of 50-percent women’s representation in government in both the legislative and executive branches. The declaration on women’s rights also applies to educational access, health care as well as opposition to gender-based violence.”

In regard to economic development, the AU ambassador said, “Continental integration must create a common market. We need to have access and movement of goods, services and information.

“The legacy of colonialism left Africa as a raw-materials supplier.

We need to develop an internal infrastructure. Transportation, telecommunications and highways are needed. In Africa we have potential because of the production of oil, natural gas and geothermal energy. Yet we are importing \$28 billion in agricultural products every year,” Ali said.

Ali continued by pointing out, “Some African countries have done quite well over the last three years. However, the global economic crisis has had rippling effects on Africa with the decline in commodity prices and tourism. This is the time to seek greater involvement in global affairs.”

As it relates to the post-colonial history of Africa, Ali said, “The Cold War had an impact on the continent and in subsequent years the policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were not helpful. The reform of the United Nations Security Council is necessary since Africa has no permanent representative. The G20 only has one African member, South Africa.”

The continuing problem of U.S. interference

Today the U.S. and the European Union have sent flotillas of warships to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean off the coasts of Somalia and other states in the region. This buildup in the naval presence of a host of imperialist countries represents a clear threat to the sovereignty and development efforts on the African continent.

When asked about U.S. military involvement on the African continent, Ali said, “The Africa Command (AFRICOM) was enacted without consultation with the various states. The AU position is that the U.S. can support African standby forces, but not station their troops on the continent.” The AU ambassador also noted that the U.S. has troops stationed in the

Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti.

In response to a question on Zimbabwe-U.S. relations, Ali said that the AU supported the new inclusive government in Zimbabwe and felt that sanctions should be lifted. The AU is pressing for more dialogue between Zimbabwe and the Barack Obama administration in Washington.

Perhaps the most difficult situation that the AU finds itself in today is centered on the Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). At present the U.S. government has backed 4,000 troops from Uganda and Burundi to serve as military “peacekeepers” in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia has faced resistance from the Al-Shabab and Hisbul Islam resistance movements, which have refused to recognize the U.S.-backed regime because of the continued presence of the AMISOM forces.

The U.S. is reported to have supplied over \$160 million to fund AMISOM and to train a new Somalia national army and coast guard. During intensified fighting in early May the resistance forces took over several key areas north of the capital of Mogadishu. On May 22 the AMISOM forces launched what was described as a counterattack.

Prior to the formation of the new TFG government in January, the Somali people had waged a two-year struggle against an Ethiopian military invasion and occupation backed by Washington. The U.S. opposed the increasing influence of the Islamic Court Union (ICU) during 2006 and consequently encouraged Ethiopia to occupy Somalia. After Ethiopia’s mission failed, Washington sought to cultivate support within the ICU, which caused a split between those more conciliatory to the U.S. and those more anti-imperialist.

Although the official position of the AU is that the TFG should be supported, most African states have not committed any troops to intervene through AMISOM.

Consequently, the U.S.-backed East African governments of Uganda and Burundi have constituted the so-called peacekeeping force, which has increasingly taken aggressive actions against the people of Somalia.

This political dilemma for the AU can only be resolved through consultation with the various forces operating now in Somalia. As long as the U.S. is supporting and financing a military solution that seeks to exclude the resistance movements inside the country, there will be no lasting peace agreements. Historically the intervention of the U.S. in Somalia and the Horn of Africa has created more instability for the people of the region.

As Kwame Nkrumah stated in his address to the founding meeting of the OAU in 1963, “Many independent African states are involved by military pacts with the former colonial powers. The stability and security which such devices seek to establish are illusory, for the metropolitan powers seize the opportunity to support their neocolonialist controls by direct military involvement. “

In this same address Nkrumah went on to point out that the presence of imperialist military bases in Africa “threaten the security not only of the country in which they are situated but of neighboring countries as well.” Nkrumah said that “an all-embracing African High Command” would be needed to “break these direct links between the colonialism of the past and the neocolonialism which disrupts us today.”

Therefore, it is necessary for Africa to break with the continuing colonial and imperialist influence and domination in an effort to realize genuine independence. Such independence can only be achieved under a socialist system where the wealth of the continent and its tremendous labor power can be harnessed for the benefit of the workers and farmers of the continent. □



Thousands in Lisbon demand relief from economic crisis.

PHOTO: PCP

Portugal–85,000 march in Lisbon

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with the Ecology Party—Greens (PEV). Jerónimo de Sousa, general secretary of the PCP, sharply criticized the so-called Socialist Party regime led by José Sócrates, which he accused of plundering the national wealth for the narrow interests of a small minority. (Junge Welt, May 25)

Spain: Anti-imperialist party restored to ballot

After the Supreme Court in the Spanish state had removed the new coalition

party, International Initiative—Solidarity among the Peoples (II-SP), from the ballot for the European parliamentary elections, on May 21 the Constitutional Court reversed that decision following broad protests. II-SP is an anti-imperialist coalition of both federal and regional organizations. II-SP supports an anti-capitalist program to confront the capitalist economic crisis and supports self-determination for the oppressed peoples of the Spanish state, including those of the Basque Country (see article in WW, May 28).

—G. Dunkel and John Catalinotto

Three GI resisters

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bid for freedom. Rather it is about whether or not the United States intentionally violated international law and ultimately its own laws regarding wars of aggression. Since the answer is so obvious, it should only be a matter of time before we get a ruling to that effect. Nevertheless, we have to remain vigilant in our efforts to claim victory.

“It is important to consider that although the War on Iraq is the centerpiece of our arguments, we need to take a closer look at the War on Afghanistan as well. ... It saddens me to say that we have once

again been hoodwinked into thinking that the actions of our leaders were made purely by ‘good intentions.’ ... We must sound the alarm on the destructive nature of this war, as well as the crimes against humanity being perpetuated.”

Shepherd continues a very active asylum campaign in Germany. He has traveled across the country, “attending events and conferences that feature not only me, but other soldiers from around the world who have also decided to resist our Government’s imperialistic designs.” He has been featured on numerous major news outlets. □

EDITORIAL

El imperialismo y el pueblo tamil

El gobierno de Sri Lanka ha declarado su triunfo sobre los Tigres de Liberación del Eelam Tamil, un ejército guerrilla que luchó por un cuarto siglo para crear un estado independiente para el oprimido pueblo tamil en este fértil país isleño que está situado cerca del extremo sur de la India. La campaña militar contra los Tigres del Tamil ha sido muy sangrienta, y ha resultado en la muerte de miles de civiles tamiles después de que quedaran atrapados/as en una península dónde sufrieron ataques aéreos, hambre y enfermedades. Aún no se sabe la cantidad total de bajas (el gobierno de Sri Lanka ha prohibido la entrada de periodistas en la zona) pero se han filtrado reportes de médicos y otras personas sobre la terrible situación.

Más de 100.000 tamiles que viven en Gran Bretaña, Canadá, Estados Unidos y otros países, han tenido vehementes manifestaciones y huelgas de hambre para pedir que estos países detengan la matanza. A principios de abril, 100.000 manifestantes marcharon por el centro de Londres para protestar los abusos contra el pueblo tamil en Sri Lanka. Luego ese mismo mes, aunque miles de tamiles ocuparon la Plaza Parlamentaria en Londres, el Foro Británico de Tamiles demandó que ese gobierno “llevara el asunto al Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU para lograr que se implemente un cese al fuego”.

Las autoridades en estos países imperialistas, con una cara compasiva, básicamente le han dicho a los/as manifestantes, “Sentimos su dolor. Pero no hay nada que podamos hacer”.

Esto es hipocresía descarada. Gran Bretaña y Estados Unidos pueden tomar una acción vigorosa, y lo han hecho, cuando se ven amenazados sus intereses imperialistas. Solamente en los años recientes, sus fuerzas militares han intervenido a un gran costo, en Irak, Afganistán y Pakistán. No fueron allá para parar un genocidio. De hecho, inventaron mentiras y pretextos para obtener los permisos necesarios del Congreso o del Parlamento. Han aterrorizado al pueblo pero no han podido destruir la resistencia, cuyo apoyo ha crecido dentro de la población y se ha hecho más fuerte. En el fondo de todo esto está la agenda imperialista de Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña para controlar esta área del suroeste de Asia rica en recursos naturales.

Además, han forzado resoluciones en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU para imponer sanciones rigurosas contra Sudán y Zimbabwe, supuestamente como castigo por violaciones de los “derechos humanos”, pero que en realidad era para proteger lo que le importa más al imperialismo: las ganancias.

Sudán tiene petróleo y está desarrollando sus recursos con la ayuda de otros países, incluyendo a China. Por causa de las sanciones, no comercia con Estados Unidos. En Zimbabwe, el gobierno finalmente les dijo a los agricultores blancos que tenían los terrenos más valiosos, que se fueran. Permitió a los veteranos de la guerra de liberación que recuperaran lo que los invasores colonialistas británicos le habían robado a sus antepasados. Antes de tomar este paso, el gobierno había esperado años para que Gran Bretaña cumpliera con su acuerdo y recompensara a los agricultores ricos, algo que no sucedió.

Las sanciones contra estos países estaban acompañadas por declaraciones de indignación en el Consejo de Seguridad sobre la defensa de los derechos humanos. Pero cuando el ejército de Sri Lanka comete masacres contra un pueblo oprimido, los imperialistas súbitamente “no pueden” hacer nada.

Cae la responsabilidad en el movimiento progresista y antiimperialista mundial de apoyar la lucha por su autodeterminación del pueblo tamil en Sri Lanka. Los imperialistas son los últimos que serían sinceros al pretender defender al pueblo tamil. □

Guerra de EEUU en Pakistán crea inmensa crisis de refugiados

Por Deirdre Griswold

No hay ninguna duda: La terrible crisis humanitaria que ahora está ocurriendo en el área del noreste de Pakistán, fronteriza con Afganistán y descrita por el Alto Comisionado para Refugiados de la ONU (UNCHCR por la siglas en inglés) como la peor crisis de refugiados desde la crisis en Ruanda del 1994, fue causada directamente por el gobierno de Estados Unidos y el Pentágono.

Más de 2 millones de personas fueron forzadas a abandonar sus hogares cuando el ejército pakistaní, financiado y equipado por el Pentágono, entró en el Valle Swat después de una semana de intensos bombardeos, por aire, aviones de guerra y helicópteros con ametralladoras.

La UNCHCR dijo que casi un millón y medio de personas se han registrado para recibir asistencia desde que la lucha comenzó hace tres semanas, elevando el número de desplazados/as en la provincia Frontera Noroeste a más de 2 millones, sin incluir las 300.000 que el gobierno provincial cree que no se han registrado. (The Guardian/UK, 19 de marzo) El sufrimiento lo padece gran parte de la población en el área. ‘Según los reportes de la ONU, solamente 130.000 personas están siendo acomodadas en los campos de los distritos de Mardan y Swabi, mientras que la mayoría están siendo forzados a albergarse con amigos/as y parientes, hasta 85 personas en una casa.’ continúa reportando el Guardian.

No hay un recuento de las muertas ni de los/as heridos/as. A la prensa no se le permite entrar en el área.

Washington ha estado exigiendo esta ofensiva por muchos años. Aún cuando el General Pervez Musharraf era todavía el dictador “electo” de Pakistán, artículos en el New York Times y Washington Post expresaban las frustraciones de la política exterior de los Estados Unidos y del establecimiento militar sobre su el titubeo para moverse forzosamente en contra de estas regiones semiautónomas a lo largo de la frontera.

Musharraf tuvo que entregar su puesto cuando un movimiento popular masivo colocó al partido de

oposición en liderato hace un año, aún cuando su candidata presidencial, Benazir Bhutto, fuera asesinada después de que regresara del exilio. Su puesto fue ocupado por su esposo, Asif Ali Zardari.

Zardari, ahora presidente de Pakistán, ha cedido a la tremenda presión de Washington y lanzó la ofensiva en contra de las áreas que Estados Unidos afirma están controladas por el Talibán, un grupo político-religioso que Estados Unidos apoyaba hasta hace poco, cuando quería derrocar al gobierno progresista de Afganistán que estaba cercano a la Unión Soviética.

Un ominoso cambio de comando

Al mismo tiempo, el Secretario de la Defensa de Estados Unidos Robert Gates reemplazó al comandante en Afganistán, General David McKiernan, con el Teniente General Staley McChrystal. Tan malo como era McKiernan, parece que McChrystal será aún peor para la gente de ese país.

El currículum de McChrystal incluye años de haber estado a cargo del Comando de Operaciones Especiales Conjuntas, efectivos “special ops” que son entrenados para ignorar las leyes convencionales de guerra y han sido descritos como tipos que “cortan cuellos y comen culebras”, en otras palabras, son los especialistas en la forma más viciosa de matar.

La administración de Obama también está enviando miles de tropas estadounidenses más a Afganistán, a pesar del obvio mandato que recibió del pueblo para acabar con las guerras allí y en Irak y traer las tropas a casa.

Toda esta sangre derramada y las amenazas no pueden borrar el hecho de que la guerra de los EEUU en Afganistán está en un profundo aprieto. Se está admitiendo cada vez más abiertamente en los medios de comunicación occidentales que la población está claramente en contra de la guerra y la ocupación. Las protestas ocurren con regularidad, especialmente cuando otro pueblo pequeño ha sido bombardeado y decenas de personas son incineradas o despedazadas por

bombas de los EEUU.

Entonces, en su manera típica, los imperialistas están intensificando la guerra para rescatarla. Han desatado una cadena entera de circunstancias en Pakistán, esperando forzar una confrontación entre musulmanes militantes contra quienes desean un país secular. También están contando con usar el ejército pakistaní en contra del pueblo, al igual que lo hicieron antes con éxito durante una larga serie de dictadores militares sostenidos por los EEUU.

El imperio británico fue construido sobre la estrategia de dividir para conquistar. Le serviría a los halcones del Pentágono recordar lo que le pasó a los británicos cuando intentaron conquistar una vez más a Afganistán en los años 1890.

Los británicos destruyeron pero no conquistaron

A pesar de su política de quema tierra y su empleo de soldados mercenarios de la India, los británicos no pudieron conquistar a Malakand, la misma región que ahora está siendo bombardeada, en su campaña de 1897 en contra del pueblo pashtu. El mismo Winston Churchill participó en esa campaña y escribió un libro vilmente racista sobre el tema.

Los británicos tenían ametralladoras y pudieron masacrar a los heroicos defensores pashtus, pero nunca los pudieron conquistar.

Hoy, el director de la región Asiática-Pacífica de Amnistía Internacional, Sam Zarifi, dice que el ejército pakistaní “parece que está persiguiendo una política de quema tierra” en Malakand. El ejército ha impuesto una política de “disparar contra todo lo que se mueva” contra cualquier persona que viole el toque de queda indefinido que se ha impuesto. (Washington Post, del 14 de mayo)

Pero el espíritu de resistencia a la dominación imperial/colonial que derrotó a los británicos en 1897 sigue fuertemente en el Valle Swat y en la región entera de la Frontera Noroeste. Las atrocidades más recientes harán imprimirlo más profundamente en el corazón del pueblo durante futuras generaciones. □

LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez y Fernando González Llort.

Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla